

Presidential Proclamation – Frequently Asked Questions

(updated September 15, 2020)

1. What visa categories are impacted by the March 11, 2020 Presidential Proclamation (P.P. 9993) and June 22, 2020 Presidential Proclamation (P.P. 10052)?

Presidential Proclamation 9993 bans entry to the United States of persons present in the Schengen Area (including Estonia). Presidential Proclamation 10052 imposes certain restrictions on visas in order to protect the U.S. labor market.

For those holding valid U.S. visas, some may travel without restrictions, while others may travel only by first seeking approval from the U.S. Embassy. If you hold a valid visa or ESTA and wish to travel to the United States, please carefully read the information below to determine what restrictions may apply to you.

For those who wish to apply for a U.S. visa, U.S. Embassy Tallinn is approving only a small number of certain nonimmigrant visas at this time, as described below.

THE GUIDANCE ON THIS PAGE REGARDING WHO MAY TRAVEL TO THE U.S. OR APPLY FOR A U.S. VISA MAY CHANGE. PLEASE CHECK BACK REGULARLY FOR UPDATES.

2. I have a U.S. valid visa. Can I travel to the United States?

You may travel to the United States without following any additional procedures if you hold a valid visa in any of the following categories:

Official visas: A, G, NATO

Air/sea crew visas: C1/D, B1 (only if annotated “OCS” for seaman working on the Outer Continental Shelf of the United States)

Student visas: F (if holding a valid Form I-20) or M (if holding a valid Form I-20).

If you hold a valid visa of another category not listed above, you must follow additional procedures in order to be allowed to travel to the United States, as described below.

3. I have a valid visa in a category not listed above. Can I travel to the United States?

If you hold a valid visa in a category not listed above, you may travel only if the U.S. Embassy approves a “national interest exception (NIE)” for your trip. If approved, the NIE will allow you only one entry to the United States within 30 days of the date of approval by the Embassy. In general, these national interest exceptions are provided to certain businesspeople providing a substantial economic benefit to the United States, academics, and persons traveling for humanitarian reasons:

B1 (or B1/B2) or O visa holders (and their dependents) who are senior-level managers and executives traveling for business reasons.

B1 (or B1/B2) visa holders seeking to install or service complex machinery or equipment and who have specialized knowledge to do so.

P visa holders who are professional athletes (and their dependents) and essential staff.

E visa holders (treaty traders and investors).

J visa holders (with valid Form DS-2019) who are professors, research scholars, short-term scholars, or specialists. An NIE may also be considered for au pairs providing care for a child with special needs or for a child whose parents are involved with COVID-19 medical care or research.

B2 (or B1/B2) visa holders traveling for humanitarian reasons: generally, persons seeking emergency medical treatment (including for family members) or seeking to visit a family member in the United States who is undergoing emergency medical care.

H-1B visa holders (and their dependents) who are public health or health care professionals, medical researchers, or are engaged with projects essential to a U.S. government agency. Other H1B visa holders and applicants may qualify, and inquiries should be sent to VisaTallinn@state.gov

L visa holders (and their dependents) who are public health or healthcare professionals or are medical researchers. Other L visa holders and applicants may qualify, and inquiries should be sent to VisaTallinn@state.gov

If you meet one of the above categories, you may seek a national interest exception (NIE) by following the procedures in items 5 and 6 below. Except for those categories in item 2 above, any visa holder who tries to travel to the United States for business purposes without obtaining an NIE will not be permitted to board a U.S.-bound flight.

4. I have a valid ESTA. May I travel to the United States?

ESTA holders who are traveling for business reasons that would have a substantial economic benefit to the United States (see item 3 above) may also seek a national interest exception (NIE) by following the procedures in item 5 below. If you attempt to travel on an ESTA without obtaining an NIE in advance, you will not be permitted to board a U.S.-bound flight and your ESTA will be cancelled.

5. I have a valid U.S. visa or ESTA and believe that I may qualify for a national interest exception (NIE). How do I apply?

If you hold a valid visa and believe that you qualify for a national interest exception (business travelers providing a substantial economic benefit, academics, and persons traveling for certain humanitarian reasons), you should write to VisaTallinn@state.gov

If the Embassy approves your national interest exception (NIE) request, you will be allowed to take only one trip to the United States, and you must travel within 30 days of the date of the approval. If you wish to travel again in the future, you will need to seek another NIE approval.

6. I was granted an NIE. What do I need to do at the airport?

Information on your NIE will be entered into applicable systems to authorize U.S. travel. Arrive at the airport early. If the airline has any questions on your travel eligibility, it should contact the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Regional Carrier Liaison Group (RCLG).

You may contact the CBP Travel Coordination Center for formal and informal inquiries related to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) at help@cbp.dhs.gov or at US phone number 1-877-227-5511.

7. I wish to apply for a visa. Are there appointments available?

The U.S. Embassy has opened a limited number of nonimmigrant visa appointments for qualified students (categories F and M) and air/sea crew (category C1/D). Other categories may also be processed, but will only be issued if the consular officer determines that a “national interest exception” (NIE) applies as described above (i.e., business travelers providing a substantial economic benefit, academics, and persons traveling for humanitarian reasons). If you do not believe that you will qualify for a visa due to the restrictions in the Presidential Proclamations, you may wish to postpone your visa application to a later date.

For travelers seeking an appointment for a B1/B2 visa: if you have an urgent need to travel on a B1/B2 visa, and believe you are eligible for an NIE (see Item 3 above for more information), you may request an expedited appointment. To request an expedited appointment, please e-mail to VisaTallinn@state.gov. A consular officer will review your request, and we will contact you with more information.

8. Can I get a refund of my application fee or ESTA fee?

Unfortunately, visa application fees and ESTA application fees are not refundable. You can reschedule your visa appointment at no additional charge during the one-year period beginning on the date the fee was originally paid. Approved ESTAs remain valid for up to two years.

9. I'm not from Estonia and my case is still pending with U.S. Embassy Tallinn. Please transfer my profile back to my country. I wish to apply there.

You may be able to use your existing account profile in your home country. However, the fee you paid in Estonia cannot be transferred to pay for a case processed outside of Estonia. If you wish to apply for a U.S. visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate outside Estonia, you will need to make a new fee payment and fill out another application form according to the application procedures at that location.